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615 man when Shaikh Mabrouk demanded that the ordeal by fire be
616 resorted to. I should have liked to agree, to see how it worked, but couldn't very well accede to the request, so released the man, much to Shaikh Mabrouk's disgust.

POISONS

682 Despite the difficulty of proof, it seems certain that poison is used
• 278 pretty extensively in some parts of Arabia (especially the towns)
[349] to remove an inconvenient person, such as a private adversary or possibly an unpleasant husband.

Rulers like the Āl Rashīd, Āl Sa'adun and Āl Sa'ud have certainly used this method in the past, when out to get the better of their political opponents, but I am glad to record that never has it been suggested or hinted (even by his enemies) that the present great ruler of Sa'udi Arabia, H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud, has ever sunk to such methods.

Probably the commonest poison is arsenic, or some preparation of it. The reason of this is that its effects are rather like cholera, so no questions are asked. Post-mortems are of course unknown. Arsenic, moreover, is easily obtained in every town in Arabia, seeing that it forms the chief ingredient in making preparations for treating camel mange, and in the bigger towns arsenic mixed with lime is a favourite [349] depilatory among better-class women.

The townspeople call poison *sim*, while among the Badawin it is known as *sapwa*.

I have been told by some of my Badawin friends that a common way of administering *sapwa* under the Āl Rashīd regime was by means of the coffee-cup. The coffee man kept some arsenic powder made into a paste on his thumb nail, and when he came to the person he wanted to poison he lifted his thumb over the edge of the cup and poured, as if by accident, some coffee over his thumb, and the poison went into the cup. The one to be poisoned drank it, later went sick, showed every symptom of cholera and then died.

An old 'Ajman shaikh told me (10th April, 1935) that when Ibn Rashīd tried to poison Shaikh Abdur Rahman al Sa'ud (the father of the present King) and his brother when they were his hostages in

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A Cup of Coffee

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Hall, he did so by the above method. The latter drank his coffee and 432
died shortly afterwards. The former spotted the coffee man's trick, 278
and did not swallow the coffee. He instead bent forward and under cover of his long sleeve spat the coffee out inside his plate and on to his chest. His chest was burnt where the coffee fell, so also was his mouth. He bore the chest scars to the day of his death.

The story is, I believe, true, though the burning is unconvincing and is probably a Badawin embellishment. If true, it suggests that an acid of some sort was mixed with the arsenic.